

and rapidly implement regulations for State driver's license and identification document security standards, to prevent terrorists from abusing the asylum laws of the United States, to unify terrorism-related grounds for inadmissibility and removal, and to ensure expeditious construction of the San Diego border fence.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of the REAL ID Act. I am pleased to join my colleagues in supporting a bill that not only tightens lax standards and loopholes in the current driver's license issuance process, but strengthens a judge's ability to determine whether or not an asylum seeker is truthful, and provides for the completion of the 14 mile long San Diego Border fence that has been halted by radical environmentalists. This bill will help implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and complete the intelligence reform we started during the last session of Congress.

The 9/11 Commission found that travel documents were as important to the terrorists as were their weapons. The simple fact is that if the 9/11 terrorists had not been able to enter the United States and operate freely—to obtain driver's licenses, open bank accounts, rent homes and cars, and board airplanes—they would not have been able to commit mass murder on that fateful day. To ensure that future terrorists no longer have access to legal loopholes to enter and remain at large in the United States, the REAL ID Act will establish minimum document and issuance standards for Federal acceptance of driver's licenses and State-issued personal identification cards. In addition, this legislation will require applicants to provide proof they are in the country legally, and tie the expiration date of the documents with the expiration of an alien's authorized term of stay. I believe that this bill enhances the security of all our Nation's identity documents so we are able to establish that people are who they say they are.

The bottom line is that our current laws fail to prevent those who may be harmful to the security of our Nation from operating freely and undetected in the United States. The ongoing stories of how terrorists took advantage of our broken immigration system provide the strongest evidence that we need to pass the REAL ID Act to make America safer. If the war on terrorism is to be ultimately successful, it is more important than ever that we take the necessary steps to strengthen security at our borders and provide law enforcement agencies the tools they need to identify those individuals who enter or remain in the United States illegally. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the REAL ID Act and demonstrate that the security of our Nation is our top priority.

CONTINUITY IN REPRESENTATION ACT OF 2005

HON. DAVID DREIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, today we are addressing another important Issue for the Continuity of Congress by introducing the Continuity in Representation Act of 2005. This is

an important part of our efforts since the 107th Congress to assure the American people that their democracy will continue in the face of any attack or any catastrophe.

The service of our men and women in uniform to protect our democracy is exemplary, and we honor them. But police and military alone will not protect this institution. We, the elected representatives, also must act to protect the House.

At the start of this Congress, we acted by adopting a House rule to help us function if we have mass incapacitations.

I know there are a few who still wonder whether we need to amend the Constitution to deal with mass incapacitation.

As I announced on January 4th, the Rules Committee will be vigorously considering continuity issues throughout the 109th Congress. We may ultimately decide that more action on mass incapacitation is needed. In the meantime, we have already put into place a procedure that will ensure that this body will be able to function if there have been mass incapacitations of Members due to a catastrophe.

Today, we are acting by re-introducing a bill to deal with mass vacancies—created when large numbers of Members are killed.

Last year, after considering how to deal with mass vacancies in the various committees, we passed the exact same bill that we are introducing today. The House adopted last year's bill with a large, bipartisan majority of 306 votes.

This bill, the Continuity in Representation Act of 2005, protects the "People's House." It fits the Founders' vision of America—a House directly elected by the people and a Senate answerable to the states. And though we've done away with the old system of state legislatures electing Senators, we maintain that historic connection to the states by allowing for governors to fill vacant Senate seats in times of death.

Mr. Speaker, James Madison, a Founding Father and former Member of the Rules Committee, addressed the importance of an elected House when he said "The right of suffrage is certainly one of the fundamental articles of [democratic Government] . . . A gradual abridgement of this right has been the mode in which Aristocracies have been built on the ruins of popular forms."

In short, James Madison valued an elected House of Representatives, and so do we. This bill guarantees that the House will always be, as it always has, a body composed only of elected Members.

The Continuity in Representation Act provides that if more than 100 Members are killed, the Speaker can announce that extraordinary circumstance and trigger a uniform, 45-day special election to replace Members in affected districts.

Some have been concerned about the 45-day period for special elections. Not too long ago, I had the opportunity to assist in a major statewide election in California.

I saw a field of 135 candidates running to represent over 34 million people. That election went off without a hitch in just 55 days. Poll workers, polling places, and ballots all came together, and voter turnout was very high. Given the smaller scope of congressional district elections, 45 days is certainly enough time.

Mr. Speaker, we need to act now. We need to ensure that we are doing our part to protect

our democracy. We need to pass the Continuity in Representation Act of 2005.

BLACK HISTORY TRIBUTE TO
JOHN AUSTIN JAMES, JR.

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, throughout the month of February, I would like to recognize outstanding African Americans of the 2nd Congressional District of Mississippi, and their contribution to Black History. The 23 counties of the 2nd District are well represented from both a local and national perspective.

Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first as "Negro History Week" and later as "Black History Month." In fact, black history had barely begun to be studied—or even documented—when the tradition originated. Although blacks have been in America as far back as colonial times, it was not until the 20th century that they gained a presence in our history books.

Though scarcely documented in history books, if at all, the crucial role African Americans have played in the development of our Nation must not be overlooked.

I would like to recognize Mr. John Austin James, Jr., of Leflore County. From 1942–1946, Mr. James was enlisted in the U.S. Army and fought in World War II, where he later received an Honorable Discharge. He also spent three years in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Mr. James departure from the military sparked the beginning of his career in education. He was formally educated and later became Department Head for the Science and Mathematics Department at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU). In 1971, he was named the Director for the Office of Institutional Research at MVSU, a position he retired from in 1992.

Mr. John A. James has been active in several civic and professional organizations. He is currently Treasurer for the Leflore County Democratic Executive Committee and former Chairman of the Board of Authority for the Delta Correctional Facility located in Greenwood, Mississippi. He is the past Basileus for the Beta Rho Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Mr. James is Co-Chairman of the MVSU Pioneers and Life Associate Member of MVSU Alumni.

Mr. John A. James has received several awards and recognitions for his outstanding community involvement and volunteer services. To name a few, Mr. James has a building on the campus of MVSU named in his honor, received the Outstanding Service Award at his church, Meritorious Service for his leadership as the Board Chairman, Omega Man of the Year, MVSU 25th Anniversary Meritorious Service plaques and others.

I take great pride in recognizing and paying tribute to this outstanding African American of the 2nd Congressional District of Mississippi who deserves mention, not only in the month of February but year round.